

Message Text

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ORIGIN PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 AF-10 CIAE-00 H-03 INR-10

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APPROVED BY PM MR. SLOSS

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

DOD

CINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 252325

E.O 11652 GDS

TAGS: MARR 10 UK

SUBJECT: INDIAN OCEAN TASK GROUP/DIEGO GARCIA

1. MINISTER, BRITISH EMBASSY (SYKES) AND WILBERFORCE CAME IN ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON (12/28) TO DISCUSS WITH PM ACTING DIRECTOR SLOSS THE FUTURE OF OUR "TEMPORARY" USE OF DIEGO GARCIA IN CONNECTION WITH THE HANCOCK/ORISKANY/BAINBRIDGE TASK FORCES.

2. SYKES RECOUNTED A CONVERSATION WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER EARLIER IN THE WEEK ON OUR GENERAL ACTIVITIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, AND SAID THAT HMG WAS OF COURSE
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INTERESTED IN ANY INENDED ENHANCEMENT OF OUR PRESENCE

THERE. IN PARTICULAR, DID WE HAVE ANY PLANS TO BUILD UP OUR FACILITIES ON DIEGO WHICH MIGHT PRESSAGE TRANSITION TO A QUASI-PERMANENT "OPERATING BASE"? HE NOTED THAT SECRETARY SCHLESINGER HAD MENTIONED A POSSIBLE EARLY REQUEST TO CONGRESS FOR FUNDS TO EXPAND U.S. FACILITIES ON DIEGO (FYI DOD HAS AGREED TO PROVIDE US FURTHER DETAILS ON THIS NEXT WEEK). HE MADE CLEAR THAT HMG WOULD EXPECT TO BE INFORMED OF SUCH PLANS WELL IN ADVANCE OF ANY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT, THROUGH NORMAL DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.

3. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT USE THE WORD "NERVOUS," SPEAKING INFORMALLY AMONG FRIENDS, SYKES MADE CLEAR THAT HMG PERCEIVES A VERY REAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN "AN AUSTERE COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY" AND "A BASE". HE AGREED THAT IT IS MUCH PREFERABLE NOT TO TRY TO DEFINE THAT POINT BEYOND WHICH A FACILITY BECOMES A BASE, BUT SAID THAT HMG WOULD HAVE TO START RAISING SERIOUS QUESTIONS WHEN A DEGREE OF PERMANENCY BECOMES APPARENT -- EITHER THROUGH THE STATIONING OF AIRCRAFT OR SHIPS, OR EVEN OF MEN TO CARE FOR THEM. HE AGREED THAT AS LONG AS THE AIRCRAFT/SHIPS WERE IN AND OUT, A CASE COULD BE MADE THAT THEY WERE TRANSIENT AND THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF PRESENT OPERATIONS ON DIEGO HAD NOT CHANGED. ONE COULD SIMPLY SAY THAT DIEGO WAS "AN INCREASINGLY AFFLUENT COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY," BUT WE SHOULD RESIST THE THOUGHT OF TRANSFORMING ITS CHARACTER INTO "AN AUSTERE OPERATING BASE."

4. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, SYKES SAID HE THOUGHT HMG WOULD BE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO CONTINUED US USE OF DIEGO FOR INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL OPERATIONS AT LEVELS APPROXIMATING THE RECENT PAST, PROVIDED THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF TRANSIENCE WAS PRESERVED. HE IMPLIED, HOWEVER, THAT ANY DESIRE TO INCREASE EXISTING FACILITIES WOULD PROBABLY PROMPT HMG TO EXAMINE THE POSSIBLE NEED TO AMEND OUR AGREEMENT ON THE USE OF DIEGO. HE AGREED THAT IF THE US INTENDED AN INCREASED PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, IT WOULD MAKE SENSE TO GIVE FURTHER THOUGHT TO THE ADVISABILITY OF HAVING A MODICUM OF EQUIPMENT/FACILITIES READILY AVAILABLE ON DIEGO -- WE SPECULATED ABOUT SUCH THINGS AS SHEDS FOR POWER CARTS & STEPS, ADDITIONAL FUEL, PERHAPS SOME

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WHARFAGE, BUNKING AND MESSING FACILITIES, PERHAPS EVEN A SMALL HANGAR FOR LIGHT MAINTENANCE, &C.

5. SYKES EVINced NO GRIEF OVER THE PRINCIPLE OF ANY OF THIS, BUT WAS NONTHELESS CLEARLY WARY OF THE WAY ONE SLIPS FROM CHASTITY INTO PERDITION. THE WORLD HAS BEEN TOLD THAT WE HAVE AN AUSTERE COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY ON DIEGO, AND THE BRITISH ARE WATCHING VERY CLOSELY ITS EVOLUTION

INTO ANYTHING APPROACHING A BASE. WE AGREED TO STAY IN TOUCH.

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6. SUBSEQUENT TO THIS MEETING PM WAS INFORMED BY DOD OF THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE BAINBRIDGE (REF - STATE 252263) AND SLOSS PASSED THIS INFORMATION BY PHONE TO WILBERFORCE. KISSINGER

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